

CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
maintained by the
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
and supported by the
CALIFORNIA INTERAGENCY WILDLIFE TASK GROUP
Database Version 8.1 (2005)

B546 Evening Grosbeak *Coccothraustes vespertinus*
Family: Fringillidae Order: Passeriformes Class: Aves

Written by: D. Dobkin, S. Granholm
Reviewed by: L. Mewaldt
Edited by: R. Duke

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A rare to fairly common resident of Cascade Range, Sierra Nevada, Warner, Siskiyou, and Trinity Mts., breeding mostly in mixed conifer and red fir habitats. Irregularly uncommon to rare in winter throughout much of foothills and lowlands, and in mountains west of southern deserts. Fairly common sporadically in southern deserts as a spring and fall transient. Distribution and abundance fluctuate markedly from year to year, even in breeding season. In winter, outside breeding range, occurs most regularly in nearby downslope areas and in Great Basin; elsewhere occurs mostly infrequently as a wanderer. Preferred breeding habitats include dense coniferous forests dominated by firs. Occurrence at other seasons apparently depends upon an ample supply of buds, seeds, berries or other fruits, in trees and shrubs, rather than on any particular habitat. Also breeds, at least sporadically, in coastal forests of Humboldt Co., and may breed in aspens in White Mts. (Grinnell and Miller 1944, McCaskie et al. 1979, Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Most important foods are seeds of fir, pine, and other conifers, and buds of hardwoods such as aspen, willow, oak, and maple. Also eats fruits and seeds of a variety of trees and shrubs and, in summer, considerable numbers of insects. Mostly feeds in canopy and outer branches of trees, but also in shrubs and on ground (Grinnell and Miller 1944, Gaines 1977b, Terres 1980). Gleans insects from foliage and ground; rarely hawks flying insects.

Cover: Trees, especially firs, and shrubs provide cover.

Reproduction: Usually nests in fairly dense, mature conifer forests dominated by firs. Nest is a loosely constructed cup of sticks lined with finer material (Harrison 1978). Nest usually located in a fir or other conifer, although uses deciduous tree sometimes. Nest mostly placed more than 10.7 m (35 ft) above ground, but may be 2.1 to 30 m (7-100 ft) high.

Water: No information found.

Pattern: Breeds and forages in fairly dense, mature mixed-conifer and red fir forests; also forages in oaks, willows, and aspens, sometimes at a distance from nest. In nonbreeding season, occurs in a variety of habitats with ample food supplies.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Highly unpredictable in distribution and abundance, even

in breeding season. Occurs year-round on breeding range, but part of population moves downslope after breeding, in numbers that vary markedly from year to year. In infrequent nomadic years, fairly common and widespread in California foothills and lowlands, and mountains of southern California; many of these individuals may be from north of the state. Records outside breeding range occur mostly from October through May.

Home Range: No information found. In a montane hemlock-silver fir forest in Oregon, Wiens and Nussbaum (1975) reported a density of 53 individuals per 40 ha (100 ac).

Territory: No data found on territory; apparently not overtly territorial (Bent 1968).

Reproduction: Breeding season lasts from early June into late August, with a peak in July. Clutch size usually 3 or 4, range 2-5. Incubation 12-14 days, mostly by female. Altricial young tended by both parents and leave nest at 13-14 days (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Usually seen in flocks of 10-100 (Verner and Boss 1980). Attracted to salt at licks, roadsides, and other sources (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

REFERENCES

- Balph, M. H., and D. F. Balph. 1976. Some factors influencing observed sex ratios in a population of evening grosbeaks. *Bird-Banding* 47:340-344.
- Bent, A. C. (O. L. Austin, Jr., ed.). 1968. Life histories of North American cardinals, grosbeaks, buntings, towhees, finches, sparrows, and allies. 3 Parts. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 237. 1889pp.
- Ehrlich, P. R., D. S. Dobkin, and D. Wheye. 1988. The birder's handbook. Simon and Schuster, New York. 785pp.
- Gaines, D. 1977b. Birds of the Yosemite Sierra. California Syllabus, Oakland. 153pp.
- Garrett, K., and J. Dunn. 1981. Birds of southern California. Los Angeles Audubon Soc. 408pp.
- Grinnell, J., and A. H. Miller. 1944. The distribution of the birds of California. Pac. Coast Avifauna No. 27. 608pp.
- Harrison, C. 1978. A field guide to the nests, eggs and nestlings of North American birds. W. Collins Sons and Co., Cleveland, OH. 416pp.
- Harrison, C. J. O., ed. 1978. Bird families of the world. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York. 264pp.
- McCaskie, G., P. De Benedictis, R. Erickson, and J. Morlan. 1979. Birds of northern California, an annotated field list. 2nd ed. Golden Gate Audubon Soc., Berkeley. 84pp.
- Parks, G. H., and H. C. Parks. 1963. Some notes on a trip to an evening grosbeak nesting area. *Bird-Banding* 34:22-30.
- Terres, J. K. 1980. The Audubon Society encyclopedia of North American birds. A. Knopf, New York. 1100pp.
- Verner, J., and A. S. Boss. 1980. California wildlife and their habitats: western Sierra Nevada. U.S. Dep. Agric., For. Serv., Berkeley. Gen. Tech. Rep. PSW-37. 439pp.
- Weins, J. A., and R. A. Nussbaum. 1975. Model estimation of energy flow in northwestern coniferous bird communities. *Ecology* 56:547-561.